

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 372

By Johnson

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Harold Hogue for his act of heroism.

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that the members of this General Assembly pause in their deliberations to recognize those Tennesseans who, without hesitation or concern for personal safety, take action to protect the lives of others, putting themselves in the line of danger in acts of true heroism; and

WHEREAS, Harold Hogue played an integral role in an impromptu rescue mission on Christmas Eve morning of 1956, and his story of heroism came full circle when he met the person whose life he helped save over sixty years ago; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hogue and his fellow engineers at the Nashville Bridge Company were working in their offices near the Cumberland River and the Shelby Street Bridge on that cold, gray, overcast morning—a circumstance that, at the time, seemed unfortunate but in retrospect was certainly a fortuitous blessing; and

WHEREAS, upon hearing a commotion outside his window, Harold Hogue looked out at the deck of the bridge expecting to see enthusiastic Christmas revelers; what he saw instead was an alarming scene: several individuals leaning over the rail and frantically gesturing toward the river below and the woman who was floating in its icy waters; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hogue alerted his colleagues, and they sprinted to the scene; he and fellow engineer Jack Knox were the first to arrive. The woman, who by then was clinging to the reinforcing bars of a partially constructed concrete pier, was yelling for someone to save her baby, who was also in the water, though not immediately visible; and

WHEREAS, nearly one minute later, the men saw something blue that looked like paper or cloth floating downstream; Mr. Knox instinctively dove into the freezing water to retrieve the

baby, then swam to the riverbank to hand the baby to Mr. Hogue, both men believing the child to be dead; and

WHEREAS, Harold Hogue rested the baby on his left shoulder and started running up the steep riverbank toward the First Aid Room on the ground floor of his office building; after a few steps, he heard the baby grunt, and the grunting continued with every bouncing step he took, until he arrived at the First Aid Room to find that the baby was breathing normally; and

WHEREAS, the nurse, who just happened to be on duty that fateful morning, quickly examined the child, a girl who appeared to be around three months old, and removed the child's wet clothing, replacing it with warm blankets; and

WHEREAS, certain that the baby would survive, Mr. Hogue returned to the bridge, where the woman was still clinging desperately to the reinforcing bars; however, her grip loosened, and she was again floating in the freezing Cumberland. Finding no rope or life ring anywhere in sight, Jack Knox again dove into the river, swimming to the woman and holding her head above water as he grabbed hold of the reinforcing bars; and

WHEREAS, Harold Hogue had designed the concrete pier that remained unfinished, the reinforcing bars of which were allowing the woman and her rescuer to stay alive; Mr. Hogue suddenly realized that if Mr. Knox could separate the bars enough to squeeze through, he would be able to stand on solid concrete that sat below three feet of water; following Mr. Hogue's direction, Mr. Knox was successful, and the final phase of the rescue, courtesy of Virgil Johnson and his tug boat, was imminent; and

WHEREAS, nearly six decades later, Mr. Hogue attended a family gathering in Memphis, where his grandson, Michael, asked to hear the story of the Christmas Eve rescue again; searching on his phone, Michael quickly found a news story of the rescue, along with the names of the mother and child, information that had remained unknown to Mr. Hogue; and

WHEREAS, Harold Hogue, at eighty-nine, was later reunited with the child he rescued—Judy Charest, fifty-nine, who lived in Hermitage, a mother of two and grandmother of six; Ms. Charest, whose mother, Marguerite Hunt, passed away shortly before the reunion, is ever grateful to Mr. Hogue and considers her survival a miracle; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Charest found Mr. Hogue to be a kind and humble man, and as a token of her infinite gratitude, she presented him with a pocket watch with the date 12/24/56 inscribed, along with the message "Everyone needs a hero. Thanks for being mine."; and

WHEREAS, Harold Hogue's quick thinking and active empathy helped saved two lives nearly six decades ago, and it is wholly fitting that he be honored; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Harold Hogue for his incredibly selfless and heroic actions on Christmas Eve morning in 1956, extending our gratitude and best wishes for every future success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.